

particularly, university life challenges. These situations might be perceived by the students as a crisis and/or a developmental opportunity.

**Objectives:** To characterize the global mental health of higher education students, in terms of emotional distress, stress and depression.

**Methods:** This is a quantitative descriptive and cross-sectional study with a sample of 220 University students attending, and not attending, professional psychological support. The evaluation protocol includes a sociodemographic questionnaire, the University Student Stress Inventory (ISEU; Pereira et al, 2004), the Mental Health Inventory (MHI5; Berwick et al, 1991), the Emotional Thermometers (ET-5; Mitchell, 2007), and the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ9; Kroenke, Spitzer, & Williams, 2001).

**Results:** We found the existence of high levels of depression, stress and distress in higher education students. In particular, students attending psychological counseling revealed more difficulties. All the variables involved are significantly correlated. This study shows evidence that less distress, less symptoms of depression and stress, and a lower need of help perception, all of them representing less need of professional psychological support, constitute the fundamental promoters of mental health.

**Conclusions:** The results enhance the need to consider psychological and sociodemographic variables in the study of the predicting factors of the students' mental health. We consider that these findings have implications in the prevention policies for the promotion of mental health in higher education institutions.

## 8. EDUCATION FOR HEALTH EATING BEHAVIORS

### INFLUENCE OF FOOD EDUCATION IN EATING HABITS IN STUDENTS FROM 2ND AND 3RD CYCLES IN VISEU SCHOOLS

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**Introduction:** Food Education as a means of promoting a healthy diet is very important nowadays, given the problems identified in the eating habits of the young's, resulting in public health problems. The intervention strategies haven't proved to be very effective and therefore children and young students still reveal inadequate diets and sedentary lifestyles.

**Objectives:** Verify the level of knowledge about food and habits of the students; Analyze how the information provided by educators is sufficient to promote a healthy diet; Understand if physical activity is being neglected at the expense of the use of new technologies in relation to the maintenance of healthy habits.

**Methods:** This is an investigation of descriptive-correlational nature based on a questionnaire. The target population of this study was the students in Viseu schools. The sample consisted of students aged between 10 and 15 years from the 5th to the 9th levels. It was randomly selected among classes belonging to each level of education. The data collected was analyzed by SPSS, using the Descriptive and Inferential Statistics.

**Results:** The majority of students revealed a deficient knowledge about the concept of healthy diet, and the recommended dosages

for the main groups of foods. Furthermore, the evaluation of the eating habits of the students showed that sometimes they prefer foods that please, like chocolate or chips, for example in disfavor of foods that promote health, such as fruits, milk or soup.

**Conclusions:** The food education is still a challenge and a major investment must be made on this area so as to promote health and minimize the important public health problems in future generations.

### EATING BEHAVIORS OF STUDENTS IN A GUARDA (PORTUGAL) ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: A CASE OF STUDY

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**Introduction:** Obesity has been considered a major public health problem worldwide and its prevalence has increased in children and youth. Family and school have an important role in the formation of healthy children and youth and in health promotion and disease prevention.

**Objectives:** To examine the prevalence of obesity in a sample of students and describe the eating habits associated.

**Methods:** This is a quantitative descriptive study with a sample of 172 students attending elementary school (middle age: 11+/0,9). The evaluation protocol includes sociodemographic questionnaire and a part with multiple items that claimed to be evaluated assessing eating behaviors.

**Results:** Through the IMC we found that 56.4% of students had a weight below normal and 39.5% normal weight; 4.1% were overweighted. It was found that most meals are taken at home, however, 65.7% have lunch at school. Most students always drink water (55.2%) and milk (61%) during the day, and consumption of alcoholic drinks are scarce, however, 9,9% consumed energy drinks (most males). Making a comparison between groups, water and vegetables consumptions more occurs in females. Most students practice physical activity (97.7%), football a sport mostly done by males and dance by females ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Conclusions:** The results suggest that healthy eating behaviors are prevalent in this sample. Students perform the four main meals, eat some food between meals and before bed. These students have a varied diet, consuming fish and meat alternately, soup most days, fresh vegetables and fruits, and the consumption of sugars is bit worrying. In terms of drinks, water is regularly drunk, but also soft drinks. Regularly practice of physical activity and good performance in school was also found.

### ASSOCIATION BETWEEN GENERAL SELF-EFFICACY AND EATING HABITS AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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**Introduction:** Food choices are the result of several factors. Individual predispositions and resiliency are responsible for regulating against alternative food challenges. Bandura (1982) describes self-efficacy as a sense of self-esteem, feelings of adequacy, efficiency and competence to tackle the problems. Self-efficacy also underlies the choices and effort spent in activities or accomplishments.

**Objectives:** To investigate associations between self-efficacy and eating habits.

**Methods:** This is a cross-sectional survey, with data collected through self-administered questionnaires. Two schools participated